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Budget Digest

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GAO 2019 ANNUAL REPORT ON FRAGMENTATION, OVERLAP, AND DUPLICATION IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) – the nonpartisan agency responsible for auditing, evaluating, and investigating federal programs – recently released its annual report identifying opportunities throughout the federal government to “reduce fragmentation, overlap, and duplication, and achieve cost savings and other financial benefits,” including increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of federal programs.¹

Why The Report Is Important. Congress has required GAO to produce these reports on an annual basis to help policymakers reduce wasteful spending – protecting taxpayer dollars – and help address our nation’s enormous debt, which recently surpassed \$22 trillion. Of the 800 recommendations GAO has proposed between 2011 and 2018, the legislative and executive branches have partially or fully implemented 621, or 77 percent, of them, **saving taxpayers \$262 billion**. However, there is still more work to be done. According to GAO, “tens of billions of additional dollars could be saved should Congress and the executive branch agencies fully address the 396 actions that remain open, including the new ones identified in 2019.”²

SAVINGS THE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES HAVE ACHIEVED BY TAKING GAO-RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

\$262 Billion Total Financial Benefits



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Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office

Findings From The 2019 Annual Report. In the latest report, released last month, GAO identified several opportunities to continue to streamline programs, increase efficiency, and reduce wasteful spending, including:

- Creating a government-wide inventory of all federal programs;
- Strengthening government-wide data standards to better track how federal dollars are spent; and
- Advancing evidence-based policymaking, such as disclosing the performance of federal programs to determine whether they are delivering the intended outcomes.³

What’s Next? The nation is undoubtedly on a fiscally unsustainable path. Without action to reverse this trend, our growing debt will have damaging consequences on our economy and national security. Efforts to reduce wasteful spending – including those informed by GAO’s annual reports – are an important part of the process as the government works to ensure taxpayers dollars are effectively and efficiently serving the needs of the American people.

¹ https://www.gao.gov/reports/GAO-19-285SP/#TOC_Introduction

² <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-285SP>

³ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/699214.pdf>